

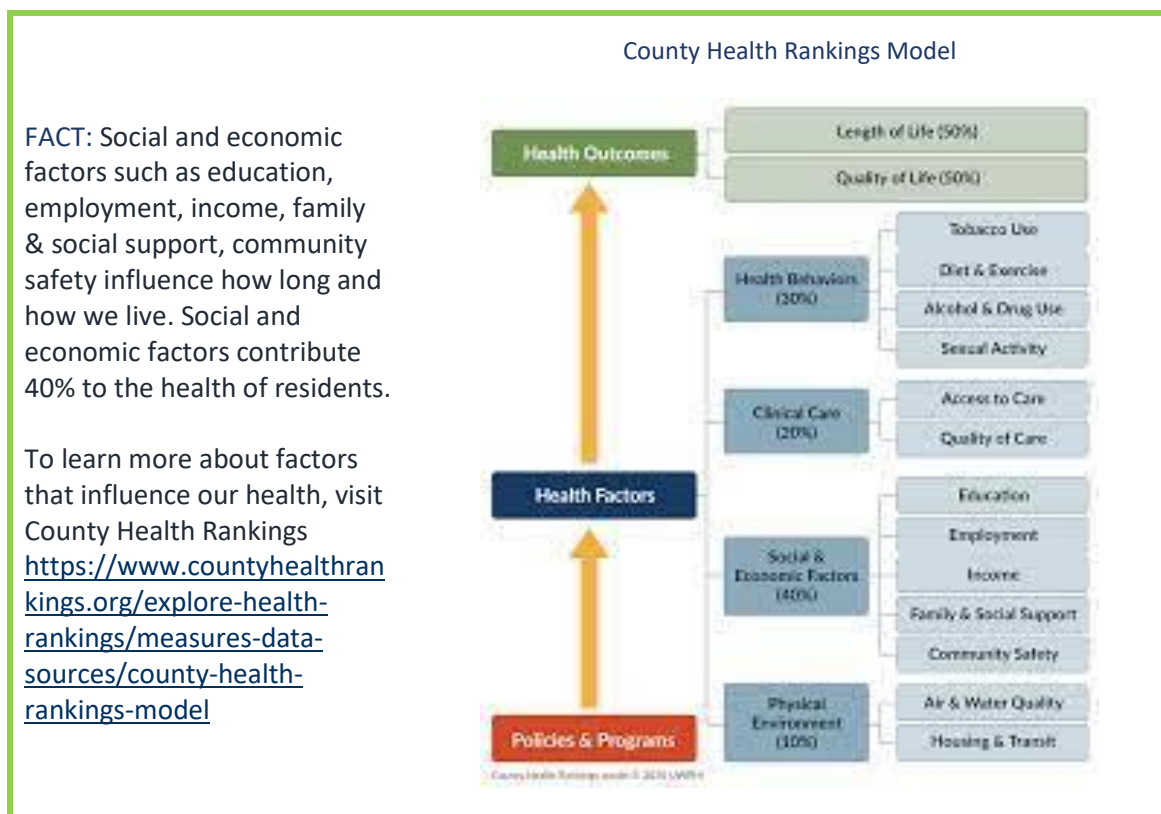
What is a Local Health Department and What Does it Do?

“Public health is what we do together as a society to ensure the conditions in which everyone can be healthy.” Public Health 3.0 A Call to Action for Public Health to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century.

What is a Local Health Department? Why Do they Exist?

A local health department is responsible for the health and well-being of everyone who lives, learns, works, and plays within their jurisdiction. They prevent, protect, and promote the health and safety of communities. Local health departments and public health system partners “provide us with a healthy community to keep us out of the doctor’s offices”.ⁱ

“Health is more than what happens at the doctor’s office ... a wide range of factors influence how long and how well we live from education and income to what we eat and how we move to the quality of our housing and the safety of our neighborhoods. For some people, the essential elements for a healthy life are readily available; for others, the opportunities for healthy choices are significantly limited.” County Health Rankings



Local health departments are the center of the local public health system, a system that includes partners from hospitals, clinics, schools, community base organizations, local municipalities, city/county departments and elected officials. Local health departments serve as the “community health strategist”, leading a multi-sector approach in creating healthy communities, where everyone can live their best life.

FACT: Healthy communities are important to a healthy economy. *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.*

Healthy communities—those in which individuals and neighborhoods thrive and are resilient—matter, as the health of the nation affects the health of the economy, and the health of the economy affects the health of the nation.ⁱⁱ Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

In carrying out the role of “health strategist”, local health departments with their public health system partners address conditions that influence health; going up stream to prevent disease, injury, and death. These upstream conditions that influence health are referred to as social determinants of health. Social determinant of health are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.ⁱⁱⁱ

Social Determinants of Health



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Healthy People 2030

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<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

FACT: Social determinants of health have a major impact on people’s health, well-being, and quality of life. Examples of social determinants of health include:

- Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods
- Racism, discrimination, and violence
- Education, job opportunities, and income
- Access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities
- Polluted air and water
- Language and literacy skills

Social determinants of health also contribute to wide health disparities and inequities. For example, people who don't have access to grocery stores with healthy foods are less likely to have good nutrition. That raises their risk of health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity — and even lowers life expectancy relative to people who do have access to healthy foods.ⁱⁱⁱ

What are the Unique Responsibilities of a Local Health Department?

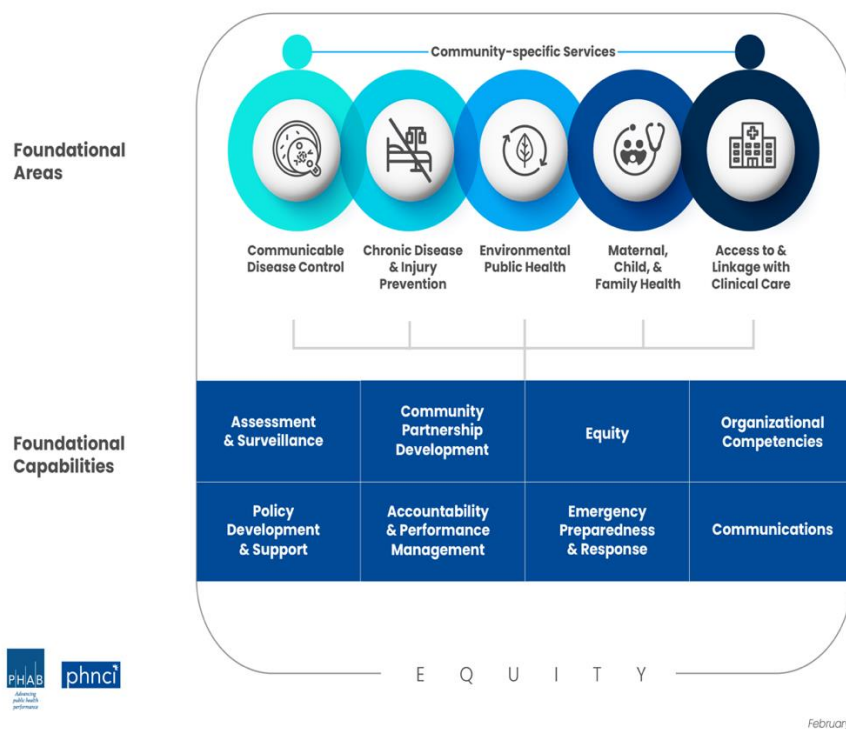
As a governmental entity, a local health department has unique responsibilities to provide public health protections and services in a number of areas. At a national level, the Foundational Public Health Services framework identifies a minimum set of foundational areas and capabilities to be available in every community.^{iv}

Foundational areas are basic public health, topic-specific programs and services aimed at improving the health of a community. They include:

- Preventing the spread of communicable disease
- Safe food, air, and water
- Supporting maternal and child health
- Improving access to clinical care services
- Preventing chronic disease and injury

In addition, a local health department provides community-specific services that are unique to the needs of the community. To be able to carry out program responsibilities and provide opportunities for all to be healthy, a set of infrastructure capabilities is necessary. Referred to as Foundational Capabilities, they include: 1) Assessment & Surveillance, 2) Community Partnership Development, 3) Equity, 4) Organizational Competencies, 5) Policy Development & Support, 6) Accountability & Performance Management, 7) Emergency Preparedness & Response, and 8) Communications.

FACT: Foundational Public Health Services is a minimum set of public health services to be available in every community in Wisconsin and U.S.



In Wisconsin, Statutes and Administrative Rules outlines what services the public can expect from a local health. WI Statutes that guide a local health department are the following:

- [Chapter 250](#) – Health, Administration and Supervision
- [Chapter 251](#) – Local Health Officials
- [Chapter 252](#) – Communicable Diseases

[Chapter 253](#) – Maternal and Child Health
[Chapter 254](#) – Environmental Health
[Chapter 255](#) – Chronic Disease and Injuries

In addition, there are a number of [State Administrative Rules Important for Public Health](#). DHS Chapter 140 – [Required Services of Local Health Departments](#) outlines requirements for Level 1, 2, and 3 health departments. DHS Chapter 140 was revised in June 2019, incorporating elements of the national foundational capabilities. Iowa County Health Department was re-certified as a Level II health department through a 140 Review Audit completed in November 2021.

Key Iowa County Health Department reference reports/documents:

- 2021 Annual Report of the Iowa County Health Department
- Mission, Vision, Core Values – Annual Report, p. 4
- Strategic Plan: Four Key Goals/Strategy Areas - 2021 Annual Report, p. 28
- [2019 Community Health Needs Assessment](#)
- [2019 Community Health Improvement Plan](#)
- [County Health Rankings and Roadmaps](#)
- 🚦 2022 rankings: Iowa County ranked # 8 overall

How Does a Local Health Department Carryout Services with Their Public Health System Partners?

Throughout the nation, local health departments carryout program services using the 10 Essential Public Health Services framework. The 10 Essential Public Health Services “provides a framework for public health to protect and promote the health of *all people in all communities*”.^v

The 10 Essential Public Health Services activities are organized within 3 functions: assessment, policy development, and assurance. The 10 Essential Public Health Services are:

Assessment

1. Assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets.
2. Investigate, diagnose, and address health problems and hazards affecting the population.

Policy Development

3. Communicate effectively to inform and educate people about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it.
4. Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships to improve health.
5. Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact health.

Assurance

6. Utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public’s health.
7. Assure an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be healthy.
8. Build and support a diverse and skilled public health workforce.
9. Improve and innovate public health functions through ongoing evaluation, research, and continuous improvement.
10. Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health.

FACT: To protect and promote the health of all people in all communities, equity is at the center of the Essential Public Health Services Framework. To achieve equity, the Essential Public Health Services actively promote policies, systems, and overall community conditions that enable optimal health for all and seek to remove systemic and structural barriers that have resulted in health inequities.^{vi}



Source: de Beaumont <https://debeaumont.org/10-essential-services/>

For more information on boards of health, refer to WALHDAB's resource: "What is Board of Health and What Does it Do?" The Wisconsin Department of Health Services/Division of Public Health oversees local health departments, supporting local public health service capacity through grants, consultation, and technical assistance. Every five years, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services/Division of Public Health conducts a 140 Review, confirming a local health department meets requirements to be a Level 1, 2 or 3 health department. Iowa County Health Department was re-certified as a Level II health department in November 2021.

Nationally, standards have been set for governmental public health. The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) established standards to carry out the 10 Essential Public Health Services. A local health department that is accreditation ready or accredited demonstrates their ability to meet national standards necessary to carry out quality governmental public health services. Wisconsin currently has 17 of 85 local health departments accredited.

ⁱ WI Department of Health Services. What Does Public Health Do. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/what-public-health-does.htm>

ⁱⁱ Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Healthy Communities: A Framework for Meeting CRA Obligations. March 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health.

<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

^{iv} PHNCI PHAB. Foundational Public Health Services. February 2022. <https://phnci.org>

^v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ten Essential Public Health Services.

<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/publichealthservices/essentialhealthservices.html>

^{vi} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ten Essential Public Health Services.

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